

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BRUSSE 04017 111816Z

71

ACTION EB-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 SP-03 AID-20 NSC-07 RSC-01

CIEP-02 TRSE-00 SS-20 STR-08 OMB-01 CEA-02 AGR-20

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FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

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USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

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PASS AGRICULTURE

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAGR, BE

SUBJ: INTERNATIONAL MEAT TRADE PROBLEMS

REF: STATE 110296

1. SUMMARY. AGRICULTURAL ATTACHE AT FAREWELL LUNCHEON WITH MINAG OFFICIALS DISCUSSED WORLD MEAT PROBLEM. BELGIANS ARE SKEPTICAL OF EFFECTIVENESS OF MEASURES TO PROMOTE BEEF CONSUMPTION AND SEE NO ALTERNATIVE TO IMPORT RESTRICTIONS AND EXPORT SUBSIDIES AS SHORT-RUN SOLUTION. END SUMMARY.

2. INFORMATION IN REFTEL WAS DISCUSSED AT LENGTH WITH MINAG CHEF DE CABINET BE DRUYCKER AND DIRECTOR GENERAL STUYCK. AFTER GOING OVER THE CHARTS AND FIGURES IN THE LATEST DIGEST OF WORLD AGRICULTURE, THEY AGREED THAT A 20 TO 25 PERCENT INCREASE IN WORLD BEEF AND VEAL PRODUCTION IN 1975 WAS WELL WITHIN THE RANGE OF POSSIBILITY. EVEN A CONSIDERABLY SMALLER INCREASE WILL PRESENT

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PAGE 02 BRUSSE 04017 111816Z

SERIOUS SHORT-TERM PROBLEMS TO THE EC, ACCORDING TO THEM,

AND VARIOUS TYPES OF IMPORT RESTRICTIONS AND INCREASED EXPORT SUBSIDIES ARE ALMOST CERTAIN TO HAVE TO BE EMPLOYED. WHEN IT WAS POINTED OUT THAT SUCH NATIONAL OR REGIONAL MEASURES WOULD ONLY EXACERBATE THE OVERALL PROBLEM, THEY CONCURRED, BUT STATED THAT NO OTHER FEASIBLE SOLUTION HAD YET BEEN PUT FORWARD.

3. BELGIUM EXPECTS TO HAVE LESS OF A PROBLEM WITH BEEF SURPLUSES THAN MOST OTHER EC COUNTRIES, THEY STATED, AND CURRENT STOCKS ARE NOT EXCESSIVE. THEY ARE MORE CONCERNED ABOUT A PORK SURPLUS WHICH COULD BECOME SERIOUS BY NEXT NOVEMBER.

4. THEY WERE QUITE PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF INSTITUTING MEASURES THAT WOULD SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASE BEEF CONSUMPTION AT A TIME WHEN REAL INCOMES OF BELGIAN CONSUMERS ARE DECLINING FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MANY YEARS. TO SINGLE OUT ONE OF THE HIGHEST PRICED FOODS FOR A SUBSIDY OR SOME OTHER MEASURE OF ASSISTANCE WOULD BE BOTH POLITICALLY UNPOPULAR AND EXTREMELY COSTLY. THE POSSIBILITY OF SOME TYPE OF INSTITUTIONAL DISTRIBUTION HAD BEEN BRIEFLY DISCUSSED BUT WAS DISCARDED AS BEING DIFFICULT TO ADMINISTER AND RELATIVELY INEFFECTIVE.

5. OUR CONCLUSION FROM THIS DISCUSSION IS THAT THE BELGIAN ATTITUDE IS VERY SIMILAR TO THAT OF MOST OTHER EC COUNTRIES, I.E. THAT BOTH NATIONAL AND EC PROTECTIVE MEASURES WILL INEVITABLY BE TAKEN. FIRESTONE

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